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Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 27 July 2017, at 10 a.m.

Temporary President: Mr Shava ..... (Zimbabwe)
President: Ms. Chatardová ..... (Czechia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Temporary President** declared open the 2018 session of the Economic and Social Council.

2. *A short video of some of the highlights of the work of the Council over the previous 12 months was shown.*

3. **The Temporary President**, reflecting on the work accomplished during his tenure as President, said that the 2017 session of the Economic and Social Council had coincided with a growing consensus on the need to reposition sustainable development at the heart of the United Nations. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was the primary road map, and the Council was where actions could be coordinated and lessons could be shared in order to move forward coherently.

4. Throughout the year, the Council had prioritized the eradication of poverty in all its dimensions, exploring various means to promote sustainable development, expand opportunities and address related challenges with a view to leaving no one behind. Much progress had been made to ensure that the Council lived up to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

5. Over the course of the session, Member States and development partners had increasingly expressed concern about a growing sense of retreat from global cooperation and weakening commitments to multilateralism, which pointed to a potential undermining of the collective quest for global peace and prosperity. Such a development came at a particularly critical juncture for the international community, as rapid changes in economies, labour markets and societies were confounding policymakers, institutions and communities.

6. Alongside those changes loomed the existential threat of climate change. Every day, its increasingly dramatic adverse impacts could be witnessed, like the recent breaking apart of a piece of the Antarctic ice shelf. While such challenges were global in nature, their impact was often gravest in countries in special situations, especially African countries. In response, the Agenda 2063 adopted by the African Union was fundamental to the continent's efforts to achieve sustainable development.

7. More broadly, it was necessary to work together to build a stronger, more coherent and more relevant United Nations, keeping in mind that the Organization had been founded on the premise that sustaining peace could only be accomplished in tandem with the development of all people across the globe. By strengthening its work throughout its substantive session and drawing on the resources of the entire system, the Council had made substantial progress in that direction during 2017.

8. The high-level political forum on sustainable development had focused on the theme "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world". Building on the previous year's success, the number of voluntary national reviews had almost doubled from 22 to 43 countries, proof of the interest of Member States in using the forum as a global platform for sharing knowledge and reviewing progress on the Goals.

9. In addition, a wide range of quality inputs had informed the thematic reviews of selected Goals. The Council system came together holistically, including the functional and regional commissions, committees and expert bodies that had proven critical in steering Member States towards evidence-based, integrated approaches to sustainable development. An increasing array of partners and stakeholders had participated in efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda. The Council had benefited greatly from the knowledge and experiences of civil society actors, in particular non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The steady increase in NGOs seeking consultative status illustrated the strong demand for engaging with the United Nations in relation to the 2030 Agenda. Consultative status had been granted to some 460 organizations in 2017, many of them from the developing world.

10. Various efforts were underway to align the United Nations development system and its various components with the overarching objectives of poverty eradication and sustainable development. As the locus for a diverse group of entities, the Economic and Social Council provided overall guidance on sustainable development. To support a repositioned development system, the Council must ensure that its work reinforced coordination and accountability for system-wide implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and that development commitments and norms were translated into meaningful change on the ground.

11. In that respect, the Council had played an important role as the central platform for Member States to discuss the repositioning of the United Nations development system, leading to the adoption of the landmark 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review. The Secretary-General had also

presented his vision on the repositioning of the development system to the Council. As part of overall efforts towards greater coherence, the Council must ensure that it complemented the work of other United Nations bodies, including through the ongoing intergovernmental discussions to align the agendas of the General Assembly and the Council, as well as their subsidiary bodies.

12. The work of the Development Cooperation Forum had generated concrete recommendations on how to leverage development cooperation to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda while focusing first on those left furthest behind. Work had been conducted on adapting institutions and policies in support of developing country priorities. It was necessary for development cooperation to contribute to the mobilization and optimal use of all means of implementation. The contributions of the Development Cooperation Forum must inform the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. Shared spaces like the Forum were more necessary than ever to exchange knowledge and engage in results-based dialogue built on mutual trust.

13. There was also a critical need for open and informed dialogue in the lead-up to the review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 68/1 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, scheduled to take place during the seventy-second session of the General Assembly. It was important to consider the Council's mandate to act as the central mechanism for coordination of the activities of the United Nations system and its specialized agencies, and its supervision of subsidiary bodies in the economic, social, environmental and related fields.

14. The Council played an important role as a multi-stakeholder platform for forging solutions to complex and emerging issues, as shown by its decision to convene a joint meeting with the Peacebuilding Commission on the situation in the Sahel. The meeting had underscored the need to address the root causes of poverty through a regional approach to interlinked challenges while avoiding a disproportionate emphasis on security in the subregion. All intergovernmental bodies should promote coherence across political, security, development and humanitarian actions.

15. The Council was playing a leading role in the provision of policy guidance on how the United Nations should partner with non-governmental stakeholders while promoting accountability and transparency. A common set of core guidelines and principles for the whole United Nations system would be crucial to safeguard the Organization's integrity.

16. The second Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up and its balanced and comprehensive outcome document had signalled the international community's strong commitment to multilateralism and the global partnership for sustainable development despite the presence of global challenges. The 2017 report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development had been a major input to the work of the Forum.

17. The Council had called a Special Meeting on infrastructure, industrialization and innovation, especially in developing countries. Preparatory events had also focused on the role of agriculture and agro-industry — a sector of huge and mostly untapped potential — for propelling growth, job creation and food security in developing countries. In response to growing demand from Member States for technical assistance in that area, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) had announced their proposal for the Accelerated Agriculture and Agro-industry Development Initiative PLUS at the special meeting. The Initiative was a global development partnership that would build on existing partnerships with United Nations agencies and lessons learned from working with developing countries in all regions. In the process of developing agro-industries and agriculture, countries participating in the initiative would be able to simultaneously make strides toward sustainable and inclusive economic growth, food security and reduction of poverty and hunger.

18. The Council should continue to be a visionary platform that anticipated and responded to new development trends with all relevant stakeholders. The universality of the 2030 Agenda provided many opportunities for knowledge-sharing within the Council. Good quality data and statistics would be necessary to review progress and leave no one behind; the adoption of the global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals was therefore appreciated as a critical milestone towards achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda.

19. Young people continued to bear a disproportionate share of the burden of government and market failures, including limited educational opportunities, a lack of decent work, and exclusion from political decision-making; young women and girls faced significant additional challenges in those

areas. It was therefore commendable that the 2017 Youth Forum had attracted a record number of participants from Governments, multilateral organizations and influential youth networks.

20. The success of the Economic and Social Council must not be measured by the number of resolutions it adopted, but by the opportunities it gave to Member States to coordinate and guide the United Nations development system and most importantly, by the impact it had on the lives of real people.

Agenda item 1: Election of the Bureau

21. **The Temporary President** said that, in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical rotation among the regional groups, it was the turn of Eastern European States to nominate a candidate for President. He therefore took it that the Council wished to elect Ms. Chatardová (Czechia), who had been nominated by those States, to the post of President of the Council.

22. *It was so decided.*

23. *Ms. Chatardová (Czechia) was elected President by acclamation.*

24. *Ms. Chatardová (Czechia) took the Chair.*

25. **The President**, noting that the election of the Vice-President of the Council from the African States would be held at a later date, said that three candidates had been nominated to fill the vacancies for the posts of Vice-Presidents of the Council from the Asia-Pacific States, the Latin American and Caribbean States and the Western European and other States. She took it that the Council wished to elect the candidates nominated by those regional groups.

26. *It was so decided.*

27. *Mr. Mahmadaminov (Tajikistan), Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) and Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) were elected Vice-Presidents of the Council by acclamation.*

28. **The President** said that the enormous interest in participation in the voluntary national review process was an encouraging sign. During the Council's discussion in 2017, a number of positive developments had been noted: millions had been lifted out of poverty in recent decades and the world was experiencing an unprecedented rate of technological development and innovation, providing new opportunities to deliver on the targets set out in the 2030 Agenda. However, many countries were also seeing rising inequalities that undermined social cohesion and universal participation in economic, social and political life.

29. The Council must continue to provide leadership on important economic and social issues and in implementation and review of the Sustainable Development Goals. The theme of the 2018 session would be "From global to local: supporting sustainable and resilient societies in urban and rural communities". The theme of the 2018 high-level political forum would likewise focus on "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies". Consequently, the key emphasis of her presidency would be to develop initiatives towards fostering sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies through the participation of all.

30. The 2030 Agenda had recognized that fostering inclusive societies based on strong and transparent institutions was an indispensable and cross-cutting requirement for sustainable development. No society could develop successfully without the rule of law and good governance. Both developed and developing countries would benefit from a strengthened social compact based on inclusiveness and leaving no one behind. To explore further collective action on that issue within the context of the 2030 Agenda, a Special Meeting of the Economic and Social Council would be held at Headquarters in May 2018. The Special Meeting would be complemented and informed by various preparatory activities that reflected on the universal nature of efforts to foster inclusion and participation for sustainable development.

31. Over the course of the upcoming year, the Council would need to reflect on how it could provide coherent support to reposition the United Nations development system with a view to effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The visionary approach of the Secretary-General aimed to ensure system-wide accountability and better link the normative and operational work of the Council while delivering on the 2030 Agenda.

32. During its seventy-second session, the General Assembly would also examine resolution 68/1 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, which would be an opportunity to discuss ways of improving the Council's working methods as well as implementing the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General.

33. The Council should continue to mobilize civil society actors in order to benefit from their valuable contributions to the global debate on development issues. Given that the number of organizations seeking consultative status had increased, the Council must ensure that the whole diverse spectrum of civil society was included in its work. The role of business was more important than ever, and the Sustainable

Development Goals would not be achieved without clear commitments from the business community. The third forum on financing for development follow-up would provide another opportunity to engage with the private sector while supporting the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Concrete ways must be found to strengthen interlinkages with the high-level political form on sustainable development.

34. The 2018 debate on integration would present a unique opportunity to emphasize the importance of policy coherence and integration at all levels. The 2018 Youth Forum would moreover provide the valuable input of young people on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. She would strive to reinforce the role of the Development Cooperation Forum within the high-level debate of the Economic and Social Council. All actors were encouraged to participate in preparations for the sixth biennial High-level Meeting of the Forum. Member States were also encouraged to participate in the fifth Global Accountability Survey being conducted by the Forum, which would provide data on the state of development cooperation.

35. Partnerships would also be strengthened in innovative ways, including through the Partnership Forum, the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, and the high-level political forum. Linkages would be reinforced with the Peacebuilding Commission in order to strengthen the peace-development nexus at the intergovernmental level. The activities of the Statistical Commission would continue to play a crucial role, including through the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data and the capacity-building of national statistical offices. The 2018 World Data Forum would be an opportunity to highlight new ways of using data to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

36. In 2018, the Commission for Social Development would concentrate its action on strategies to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development for all, while the Commission on the Status of Women would examine opportunities to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in rural areas. The Committee for Development Policy would conduct its triennial review of the least developed countries and determine which countries should be added to or removed from the list; the results of that review would allow the countries in question to better address their structural development problems.

37. As enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, one of the goals of the Organization was to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom; the 2030 Agenda was an excellent tool to do so. It was the current generation's responsibility to ensure a better future for the planet and the peoples upon it.

38. **Mr. Wu** Hongbo (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that addressing the deep inequalities that existed among and within countries was important for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring peace and security. In addition, global temperatures were rising and many regions were already feeling the impact of climate change.

39. International support for sustainable and resilient societies was based on recognition of the fact that global challenges could not be addressed in isolation. Providing collective support to the poorest and most vulnerable was in the interests of all. In challenging times, solidarity, shared responsibility and open dialogue were more important than ever.

40. Solidarity and shared responsibility were embodied in a number of major global agreements, including the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Together, they formed an action plan for people, planet, peace, prosperity and partnership.

41. The agreements demanded new thinking, innovative action at all levels and strong coordination and collaboration. The Council had a key role to play in that regard. It could also support implementation through the sharing of integrated, holistic and results-oriented approaches. The 2018 session was an opportunity to see how national approaches and the Sustainable Development Goal indicators could support one another.

42. Supporting sustainable and resilient societies posed a significant challenge for the United Nations development system. His Department welcomed the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, which was intended to align the United Nations development system with national implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The review promoted coherence, efficiency and effectiveness. The 2018 session of the Council could further those efforts.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (E/2018/1; E/2018/L.1)

43. **Mr. Dolbow** (United States of America) said that the United States supported the Secretary-General's

intention to reform the United Nations and also maintained that consideration must be given to how to reform the Council. The provisional agenda and the calendar of conferences and meetings for the 2018 session were very similar to those of the previous session and did not currently reflect the ongoing high-level review of the work of the United Nations.

44. In its resolution 2017/27 on the calendar of conferences and meetings in the economic, social and related fields, the Council had approved the provisional calendar, to be updated, as necessary, in the light of the decision of the Economic and Social Council on the working arrangements for its 2018 session and other relevant decisions to be adopted by the Council or the General Assembly. The Council had also noted that the Assembly would review the arrangements contained in Assembly resolution 68/1, entitled "Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council", at its seventy-second session. In line with its resolution 2017/1 on the working arrangements for the 2017 session, in which the Council had said it was mindful that it might need to convene additional meetings as needed, the Council could also decide to shorten or decrease the number of meetings.

45. The review of the work of the Council was crucial for improving its effectiveness and efficiency. The agenda and calendar in particular should be reviewed thoroughly. His delegation urged all Member States to participate in the review process with a view to updating the Council's working methods and agenda so that it could address current social and development needs effectively. Just as Member States had called on the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, through the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process, to identify and leverage their relative strengths and coordinate instead of competing, Member States should identify their own strengths in the field of economic and social development with a view to improving efficiency.

46. Raising the issue of duplication, he said that some meetings of the Council mirrored those of the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies. Low turnout at some meetings of the Council, including the Coordination and Management Meetings, showed that many Member States questioned their effectiveness, underscoring the need for Member States to work together to increase the impact, relevance and originality of the Council's work.

47. There was also a need to eliminate duplication in agenda items. Member States could not afford to engage in duplicative negotiations. Equally, his delegation would not tolerate repeated renegotiation of the same issues, often unrelated to the topic at hand, which distracted from the overall goal of achieving social and economic development, undermined goodwill and trust, and diverted resources and attention away from the people in need of help.

48. Preparation for the 2017 session of the Council had taken too long. Documents had not been released far enough in advance and had not been made available in one single location. For example, on 21 July the Mission had received via email an advance version of resolution 2017/1, but the provisional agenda had only been released in the form of a link in the Journal and had not been distributed to Member States. With regard to the Coordination and Management Meetings held on 25 and 26 July 2017, several of the documents under consideration had been updated and circulated on the evening of 21 July, a Friday, giving the Mission just one working day to review hundreds of pages. Meanwhile, the web page for the current meeting had not been updated and still indicated that the relevant documents would be available shortly.

49. Member States should be able to focus on coordinating with their capitals on the content of documents, instead of scrambling to review them. The United States urged the Council to agree on a single location where the most recent versions of documents would be posted. In addition, all documents should be made available at least three working days before the relevant meeting, without which Member State oversight of the Council was extremely difficult.

50. **Ms. Ravilova-Borovik** (Russian Federation) said that the current session of the Council was significant because the General Assembly was tasked with assessing the implementation of resolution 68/1. In addition, the high-level political forum would hold the third review of the Sustainable Development Goals. While the Russian Federation was open to dialogue with all interested parties on how to strengthen the Council, decisions should not be taken under the auspices of achieving the 2030 Agenda that would directly affect the configuration of the United Nations and its main subsidiary bodies. The 2030 Agenda was critically important, but it should not be the only basis for reforming the United Nations.

51. In its resolution 67/290 on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the General Assembly decided that the reviews of the forum should provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders and stressed the need to further enhance

the consultative role and participation of the major groups and other relevant stakeholders.

52. Nevertheless, expanding the role of stakeholders should not come at the expense of the rights of Member States, as had occurred during the 2017 forum. During the presentation of the voluntary national reviews, non-governmental organizations had exceeded the time allotted for statements. Member States were given just one minute to comment, which did not give them sufficient time to ask the presenters in-depth questions. She urged the President to take those observations into account for the 2018 forum. Both Member States and civil society representatives should have the opportunity to express their opinions calmly, instead of competing for the microphone.

53. **The President** said she took it that the Council wished to approve the provisional agenda of its 2018 session, as contained in document E/2018/1.

54. *It was so decided.*

55. *The provisional agenda of the 2018 session of the Council was adopted.*

Draft resolution E/2018/L.1: Working arrangements for the 2018 session of the Economic and Social Council

56. **The President** said that the draft resolution contained no programme budget implications.

57. **Ms. Raadik** (Estonia), speaking on behalf of the European Union, noting that the decision on the date of the 2018 Development Cooperation Forum had been postponed, said that the long-standing position of the European Union was that that the Development Cooperation Forum should take place before the Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up, or at the very least before the high-level political forum on sustainable development, if the former were not logistically possible.

58. The discussions conducted in the Development Cooperation Forum were an important input to the high-level political forum, as had been recognized in paragraph 17 of General Assembly resolution 70/299. Earlier resolutions referring to the Development Cooperation Forum, including resolution 61/16, had come into effect before the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the establishment of the Agenda's follow-up and review architecture and had thus been superseded by subsequent resolutions, in particular resolution 70/299.

59. **Mr. Zhong** Sheng (China) said that under the Charter of the United Nations, both the Council and the General Assembly had their own respective areas of focus. While it was true that the bodies dealt with some of the same agenda items, the membership and focus of the bodies meant that their contributions were different. The mandates of both bodies should be respected. With regard to the timing of the Development Cooperation Forum, in accordance with resolution 70/299 the Forum should be held biennially prior to the high-level political forum. Given that the Development Cooperation Forum was intended to aid preparations for the high-level political forum, there was a need to consider how to enable the Development Cooperation Forum to make more effective contributions and whether the two should be more closely connected or delinked entirely.

60. **Mr. Vestrheim** (Norway) said that based on the 2017 session of the Council, he wondered whether there was a need to allocate 10 days for the Coordination and Management Meetings and 3 days for the Integration Segment. Norway urged the Bureau to look at how the Council's time was managed. Short, focused and effective meetings were likely to strengthen the engagement of the Council's members.

61. **Mr. Aguirre Vacchieri** (Chile) said that while it was true that were a number of resolutions that appeared to indicate that the Development Cooperation Forum should take place before the high-level political forum, the situation was unclear and there were various possible interpretations. At the last meeting of the outgoing Bureau, it had not been possible to reach a unanimous agreement on a date for the Development Cooperation Forum. Chile was eager to reach an agreement on the most appropriate and useful date for the Forum and would be extremely flexible in that regard.

62. *Draft resolution E/2018/L.1 was adopted.*

63. **The President**, turning to the question of seating arrangements for delegations, proposed that, as in the past, lots should be drawn to determine which delegation would occupy the first seat.

64. *The delegation of Andorra was selected by the drawing of lots to take the first seat.*

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.